



E  
533  
G 88



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

*Chap.* E532

*Shelf* G88

PRESENTED BY

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.









*P. G. State*

AN  
ORATION  
BEFORE THE  
RE-UNION SOCIETY  
OF  
VERMONT OFFICERS,

IN THE  
REPRESENTATIVES' HALL, MONTPELIER, VT.,

November 4, 1869.

BY GEN. WILLIAM W. GROUT,  
BARTON, VT.

---

RUTLAND:  
TUTTLE & CO., PRINTERS.  
1869.

*G. S. C.*





*Joint Resolution providing for the printing of Gen. William W. Grout's oration before the Re-union Society of Vermont Officers.*

WHEREAS, The oration of Gen. William W. Grout, delivered before the Re-union Society of Vermont Officers during the present session, would be, if preserved, a valuable acquisition to the history and literature of the State ; therefore

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives, That the Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate be, and are hereby directed to procure the printing of one thousand copies thereof, for the use of the General Assembly.*

G. W. GRANDEY,

*Speaker of the House of Rep.*

GEO. N. DALE,

*President pro tem of the Senate.*



# MILITARY RECORD OF VERMONT.

---

MR. PRESIDENT AND COMRADES, AND LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

Vermont, the first-born into the family of States, achieved her existence through the military prowess of her people. She was the legitimate child of war. This was true, not only of her population, at the time of her admission into the Union, but was equally true of her territory, which, from time immemorial, seems to have been set apart as a species of martial arena dedicated to hostile expeditions and enterprises. The aboriginal tribes even were wont to regard it as neutral ground. The fierce Pequots upon the south, the warlike Iroquois on the west, and the blood-thirsty Cossucks and wild tribes of St. Francis on the north and north-east, had, for how many centuries, no tongue or pen can tell, looked upon these Green Mountains as a sort of charmed yet fated spot; common, as a hunting and battle ground, to all, but safe as a home for none. Hence upon the exploration of this part of the continent, the territory of Vermont, except a narrow strip along Lake Champlain, was found uninhabited by human kind. Constantly traversed by the surrounding tribes in their hostile expeditions against each other, it must have been the theatre of the most appalling Indian conflicts—and had come to be regarded, as is the brief space between contending armies, dangerous ground;

nor was this condition improved during the colonial period, but much the same state of things was continued.

In the early dawn of the seventeenth century, the spirit of adventure and discovery being at its height in Europe, Sir Jacques Cartier, the celebrated French navigator of St. Malo, discovered Canada and the St. Lawrence; and straightway the French crown, under the law of nations, laid claim to all that vast territory drained by the St. Lawrence and its tributaries, including, of course, the great chain of lakes. Later, the pious Marquette, to whom, equally with Champlain, "the salvation of one soul was of more consequence than the conquest of an empire," bore the cross of the Jesuit fathers westward even to the banks of the Mississippi, the mouths of which were afterwards discovered by LaSalle, another Frenchman, which, under the same law, gave the great valley to the French also. Meantime the English had taken possession of the entire Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Georgia, and had pushed their settlements northward into the interior towards Vermont, as far as Greenfield. With the French thus upon the north and the English upon the south, and they old-time enemies, and not only at war at home, but from the very first fiercely contending for the supremacy here in the new world, the territory of Vermont during that series of Indian and colonial wars which run through nearly a century and a half, was still *dangerous ground*; the pathway of advancing and retreating armies, and the lurking place of their savage allies. It was still uninhabited. No set of men had then been found brave enough to undertake the work of wresting from nature's grasp these rugged hillsides and mountain slopes; and it was not until 1759, when, in that decisive "contest for empire" on this continent, before the walls

of Quebec, between Wolfe and Montcalm, England was victorious; and the treaty of Paris followed, ceding Canada to Great Britain, that the territory of Vermont was relieved of these dire influences of war and her colonization undertaken; chiefly by bold adventurers, who had taken note of the capabilities of her soil and climate in their marches and countermarches across her territory, during the wars that had preceded.

These men, under grants from a Royal Governor, had carved out for themselves homes in this mountain wilderness, and had here set up in peace their Lares and Penates. Suddenly, however, this territory, which no one during the centuries back, not even the Indian tribes had dared to own, so excited the cupidity of outsiders, that it was deemed common prey for the surrounding colonies, and was claimed in part by New Hampshire and Massachusetts, and wholly by New York. And, as if this region, so long shunned by man and left to the wild antics of war, would not, without strife, be subject to civilization, these claims, which as all know were resisted with spirit by the brave men whose firesides were at stake, culminated in a series of disputes characterized by violence and bloodshed—and this brings me to say, that for more than a quarter of a century before the admission of Vermont into the Union, her people held the attitude of armed resistance to the encroachments of an unwarrantable jurisdiction.

When the colonists first remonstrated and then revolted against the unjust exactions of England, it was no new subject to the hardy independent pioneers upon the New Hampshire grants. They had before that petitioned the crown and remonstrated with grasping governors in vain

and had already drawn the sword, and for the maintenance of their rights, had, through their chosen leader, declared themselves "ready to retire to the caves of the mountains and wage an eternal warfare against human nature." The spirit of resistance to the mother country which had been "aroused in Massachusetts by that sanest of madmen James Otis; in Virginia, by that bold and fiery patriot Patrick Henry, and in South Carolina by the lofty, fearless and eloquent Gadsden," was more than answered in Vermont by the record then already made, by the invincible Allen and his brave Green Mountain boys, against the New York Sheriffs and Surveyors, as well as against Col. Reid's tenants and the Durhamites.

The very genius of liberty itself seems to have been derived by these men from the free mountain air, which they breathe, and from the wild and rugged surroundings of nature, in the midst of which, they dwelt. They were from the very first of that class of devout disciples of liberty, whose patriotism took a *practical* turn and whose faith in bayonets and bullets was more than orthodox. Hence, when the colonists raised the continental standard and the tide of war, first under Carleton, and then under Burgoyne, swept up from the St. Lawrence and overrun our northern border, the Green Mountain boys, forgetting for the time all minor wrongs, promptly changed front and gave battle to the common enemy; and as the result Ticonderoga, Crown Point and Bennington were among the trophies of Vermont valor in the *first* war of the Republic.

In 1812, Vermont, not stopping to consult the oracle of party spirit, but answering the puerile order of a misguided executive, with the same patriotic formula that Epaminondas did his superstitious monitors of old, again,

"Her sword bravely draws,  
Asking no omen but her country's cause."

Asking not even the pardon of an offended Governor and commander-in-chief in and over the State. In that crisis, to the credit of Vermont, her sons, with something still of the spirit of Allen and Warner, disregarded that ill-timed proclamation, "to forthwith return to the respective places of their usual residence within the State," and replied in that remarkable language: "We shall not obey your Excellency's order for returning; and would inform you that an order or invitation to desert the standard of our country will *never* be obeyed by us, although it proceeds from the Governor and captain general of Vermont."

Thus, in 1812, did Vermont boys aptly meet manifesto with manifesto, and in observance of the only law for the true soldier marched to the sound of the enemies' guns at Plattsburgh; and, after the brisk little cotillon on that bright September morning, Sir George Provost, deeming "discretion the better part of valor," under cover of the following night, hastily packed his kit, and with his British regulars, like the Arabs,

"Folded his tents  
And silently stole away."

Thus did Vermont soldiers, in spite of an unwilling Executive, fight their way upon the record into the *second* war of the Republic; and afforded our gallant little State the proud distinction of having furnished a large part of that raw militia, before which, a superior number even of veteran troops, trained to war under the Duke of Wellington, had hastily retreated. Glory enough, sure, for Vermont in that war.

In the slight skirmish with Mexico, the enlightened public sentiment of Vermont, already well educated in the



school of equal rights, could feel no special pleasure in responding to a call from the constituted authorities for troops. Our people looked upon the war as waged for the extension of human slavery, and the opening up of new marts for the trade in human blood; against which every noble impulse of the Vermont heart revolted. Nevertheless war had been declared, the flag of our country had been unfurled and the honor of the nation was at stake. Vermonters saw this, and could not suppress the feeling, that the war, after declaration, was *their* war; the flag when unfurled was *their* flag, and the honor that was at stake was their honor. Neither could they consent that the record of the State, so brilliant in previous wars, then in their keeping, should suffer stain or blemish through their defection. Perhaps they had in mind the proud position accorded their State in the geography of their school boy days; which, while it made New Hampshire famous for her mountain scenery, Maine for her lumber, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut for their manufactures, said of Vermont that she was "celebrated for the part taken by the Green Mountain boys in the war for independence." However this may be, she at least did her duty. She voted men and money for the war; she filled her quota from the bravest of her sons, but few of whom lived to return to the State. Among the number thus laid a sacrifice upon her country's altar was the gifted, lamented Ransom.

Such, in brief outline, is the military history of Vermont previous to the late slaveholders' rebellion; when, of a sudden, with hardly a note of warning, the glare of battle lit up Sumter's walls. Instantly, as from profound sleep, the nation was aroused from the lethargic repose of a long peace; the enervating influences of which had,



in Vermont, disarmed and disbanded her entire militia, save a few independent companies ; in which as the type of the Vermont soldier, to slightly amend the great Poet, "the native hue" of Vermont's early resolution "was *seemingly* sicklied o'er with the pale cast" of home guard effeminacy. Whether *really* so or not, let the bloody record of the 34,000 men who went out from Vermont, leaving home and its endearments, friends and their society, and voluntarily endured the ennui of the camp, the fatigue of the march, the loneliness of the solitary midnight watch, the chill of the bivouac, the disease and death of the hospital, and all the indiscribable horrors of the battlefield make answer—yes, let that record, so replete with glory, make answer. But here I shrink from the task before me. How shall I in fitting words pass in review the heroism, the endurance, the sufferings, the gallantry and indomitable bravery of those men ? How, also, suitably portray the sacrifices, the heart-longings, the mental struggles, the keen anguish, the deep sorrow, the tears and the prayers of Vermont homes, during those four eventful years, which, though still fresh in the memory of all, yet already seem like a dream or a tale that is told.

I shall not undertake to give a detailed account of the different Vermont organizations, nor of the special claims of each to honorable mention. This field has been already fully canvassed in previous addresses before you—and I shall content myself in the brief space to which, by the proprieties of the occasion, I am limited, with some hasty allusions to those *crises* of the struggle in which Vermont troops participated. But first, a word about the *character* of that struggle.

In lamenting the death of those twin patriots of the

Revolution, Adams and Jefferson, (which it will be remembered occurred on the fifteenth anniversary of our independence,) Webster said: "No age of the world will ever come in which the American revolution will appear less than it really is; one of the greatest events in human history. No age will ever come in which it will cease to be seen and felt, on either continent, that a mighty step, a great advance, not only in American affairs but in human affairs, was made on the 4th of July, 1776." The cardinal truth which has made that day immortal, (but which, from some of his after utterances, it would seem Mr. Webster must have forgotten,) was that "all men are created equal."

That was the proposition that echoed round the world with such alarming emphasis, shaking thrones, and carrying consternation and dismay to titled dignitaries and highborn aristocrats everywhere. What else could it have been? Certainly not a mere declaration of independence by the colonies from home rule, for that was no new thing in history. Since the quarrel between the herdmen of Lot and Abraham and the division of the world which followed, there is hardly a chapter in human affairs, either sacred or profane, in which man is not found constantly setting up for himself. But never before was the equality of man declared. This alone lifted the declaration above the common level of every-day philosophy, and must have been the "mighty step" alluded to by the great statesman. And it was truly a "mighty step" for any set of men to assert as one of the fundamental principles of government, that "all men are created equal." The poor equal to the rich; the weak equal to the strong; the common people equal to the nobility; even the beggar in rags equal to the king in

courtly apparel, who the world had been taught ruled by divine right. All who bore God's image "created equal" before the law. Equal in those inalienable rights, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Yes, all created equal heirs of liberty. So said the declaration. As an abstract proposition it was true, but in point of fact it was a splendid lie. The millions of human beings held in the galling fetters of a worse than Egyptian bondage, pronounced it false. It was simply a declaration, such as lawyers make, which, as every one knows, without proof, goes for nothing. The fathers did not *supply* the proof in support of this bold allegation. They attended only to the "*law side*" of the case; and when they closed the testimony on that point with Cornwallis, at Yorktown, supposed they had made good in all essentials their declaration and were entitled to judgment in chief. This was a great mistake. All was quiet, however, for a little time, but soon difficulties arose. The silver-tongued Clay suggested compromise, and  $36^{\circ} 30'$  was agreed upon as a substitute for the declaration. Only think of it, north of that imaginary line it was agreed "all men were born free and equal." South, some to freedom, and alas! some to slavery. The higher law-men cried *sin*, and invoked the judgment of God. The slaveholder, girt about with cotton, and waxed strong and insolent, very soon snapped his fingers at the line  $36^{\circ} 30'$ , and through a truckling judiciary tacked on Dred Scott as an amendment; which made the declaration read, "the negro has no rights which the white man is bound to respect." Meantime public opinion throughout the civilized world, always a little cynical, and not without something of justice, towards what it had termed the hollow pretensions of this country to liberty, said that judgment had

already been too long suspended; that the American people had utterly failed in their declaration, and ought to have suffered non-suit and been turned out of court long before. Such was the situation when, in 1860, the people, with conscience and pride both stinging to the quick, by solemn verdict declared, in the election of Abraham Lincoln, that no more free territory should be passed over to slavery. Slavery defiantly answered, vested rights, the divine sanction and secession, and appealed to arms. Thus came up to the last tribunal of earthly resort, the arbitrament of the sword, the "*equity side*" of this great question in the declaration, which for more than fifty years had shook the fabric of this government to its very base; and which, before it was finally settled at Appomattox, invoked the largest chancery powers of the great heart of a great man, and taxed to the utmost the physical resources, the patience, the tenacity and the courage of the American people. It was sought for a time to carry on the war constitutionally; for the preservation of the Union alone, wholly ignoring the declaration; but, like the ghost of the murdered Banquo, this great question would not "down;" not even at the bidding of senates, and cabinets, and commanders. It shook the "gory locks" of 4,000,000 slaves in the face of Abraham Lincoln, and called the great chancellor himself to witness that he "made of one blood all the nations of men." Right at last prevailed, and the proclamation which followed, striking off the shackles of the enslaved, returned to first principles, reiterated and made practical the truth in the declaration that "all men are created equal;" straightway the constitution, by amendment, was made to conform therewith, and suddenly, as light after an

eclipse, England's boast, through her gifted Mansfield, became our boast.

"Slaves cannot breathe in our land, if their lungs  
Receive our air, that moment they are free."

Such was the character of the struggle from the Vermont standpoint. Our people from the first looked upon the contest as one of ideas and principles, and as but the closing out of the Revolution of '76, in which the fathers but half did the work; making it a revolution not merely in the external forms of administration, but in the great principles which underlie the very foundation of government itself. And such has been the constancy of Vermont to these principles of liberty and equality, ever since she opened the revolution on the 14th of March, 1775, by breaking up the Royal Court at Westminster, (which, by the way, Massachusetts never could understand, was before the affair at Lexington in the April after,) and such her devotion thereto that for years she has been pointed to as "the star that never sets." As an incidental outcropping of these principles, her judiciary long since decided, on requisition for the return of a fugitive from slavery, that before a Vermont court, nothing short of a bill of sale from God himself would give man title to his fellow man.

Imbued with such sentiments, and signalized with such a birth and early history as we have seen, and crowned too with such heroism in former wars; who need inquire, what of Vermont during that struggle? who could doubt that Vermont would throw her whole soul into the conflict? Who could doubt that when the clarion of war should sound, Vermont would be ready for the fray?

To prove this, need I recount how from hillside and valley, and mountain fastness Vermonters rallied at the call—how the farmer left his plow, Putnam like, to rust



in the furrow ; how from every department of industry in the State, and from every walk in social life ; how from the cottage and the villa men came forth with the blessing of mother and sister, of wife and lover, the fair ones ever emulating the lofty example of the revolutionary matrons, who "took down from its hanging place on the wall the trusty firelock, and handing it to husband, brother, or son, said, go and in God's name strike for liberty." Need I follow these men to the field, and remind you that Vermont, with her armor on, was in the first battle of the war ; and how, ever after, wherever Vermont troops were stationed, whether in the department of the gulf, beneath a burning sun, in the midst of malaria and fever, or with the oft-beaten but never defeated Army of the Potomac, through the blood and carnage of her forty battles ; whether in the valley under Sheridan, or at Port Hudson under Banks ; whether in camp or on the march ; whether giving or receiving battle ; how everywhere, at all times and under all circumstances, Vermont soldiers did their duty, and preserved unsullied the ancient honor of the State ? Need I recite the deeds of these brave men upon the Peninsula, at Antietam, Fredericksburgh, the Wilderness, where the "old brigade," through a terrible slaughter which cost more than a thousand men, saved the 2d Corps from capture, and the left wing of the army from ruin ; Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and the final conflict which drove the enemy from their entrenchments in front of Richmond ? Need I follow Early in that stealthy but rapid march on Washington in July, 1864, by which he expected to surprise and capture the capitol, but how he found the 6th Corps, "with Vermonters ahead and the column well closed up," only twenty-four hours from Lee's front at Petersburg, 150 miles away,

on the ground, disputing his passage into the city ; and how foiled, the rebel general sulkily withdrew to the valley, and was afterwards slightly hurried at Winchester and Cedar Creek ; and how, uncivil though it was, the Vermonters are said to have had a hand in the hurrying ?

Need I more than name to Vermont soldiers Gettysburgh, where for three days everything hung trembling in the balance ? The importance of that battle in both a military and political point of view, however much augmented, can never be exaggerated. Lee, flushed with his signal victory over Hooker at Chancellorsville, had boldly taken up his line of march for the great centers of wealth and population in the free States, and proposed, by giving the North a taste of war, to conquer a peace on Northern soil. The political horoscope was deemed favorable for this *coup de main*. The anti-war party was everywhere active. Many openly, and more covertly were demanding peace and denouncing the war as a failure. The mob in New York had already organized in resistance of the draft, and were awaiting the arrival of their brethren from Lee's army, then in the heart of Pennsylvania. The military situation, too, was most dismal ; the Army of the Potomac beaten at Bull Run, driven from the Peninsula, fooled at Antietam, and again badly beaten at Fredericksburgh and Chancellorsville, in which two last battles there was an aggregate loss of more than 30,000 men, and not an inch of ground gained ; had, sober, but *undismayed*, followed Lee into Pennsylvania and were sullenly hanging upon his rear and flank, covering Washington and Baltimore. In no other quarter was the sky more propitious. Along the coast our armies were at a stand-still ; Milroy had been overwhelmed at Winchester. Grant, then but a

major general and in the infancy of that career which has since rivalled the fame of the brilliant Duke of Marlborough, who, history says, never besieged a city he did not capture nor fought a battle he did not win, still stood before the frowning entrenchments of Vicksburgh. Though himself confident, the country doubted. Banks, in the heart of a hostile region remote from his base, was confronted by a force superior to his own, and could only await events in other quarters. Such was the political and military situation when, on the 1st of July, 1863, Lee, deeming his battalions invincible, resolved to wipe out the Army of the Potomac, the only hindrance to his splendid schemes, and suddenly turning, fell like a thunderbolt upon the 1st Corps, under Reynolds, at Gettysburgh. This was a signal for the concentration of the Army of the Potomac; and the gallant Sickles, who had positive orders to hold Emmitsburgh "at all hazards," and be ready to concentrate on Pipe Creek, a line fifteen miles to the rear, at neither of which places was there any enemy nor anything to do, promptly pushed his corps in the direction of the fighting, and reached the field in season to save the remnant of the 1st Corps from utter annihilation, and the 11th Corps the necessity of further "tall running" for that day at least. About the same time the 2d Vermont Brigade, under our own Stannard, took up its place in the thinned ranks of the 1st Corps. The darkness which closed in upon the disasters of that day was not more oppressive than the gloomy forebodings which filled the hearts of the American people. The fragment of the army then in line also shared, in a measure, those forebodings. The 10,000 killed, wounded and missing in that first day's work was fully one-eighth of Meade's entire force, only about one-third of which then



confronted the enemy. The whereabouts of the rest of the army, with its commander, was unknown, at least to the men and subordinate officers. Unless it came up, the second day could be but a repetition of the first.

Welcome disturbances to the weary sleepers that night were the short, sharp commands, "halt," "front," "right" or "left dress," as the case might be, which commands run through much of the night and intervals of the next day until about 4 p. m., when, by a forced march of 36 miles, the 6th Corps, "Sedgewick's gamecocks," "with the Vermonters still ahead," wheeled into line and the Army of the Potomac was ready for battle; in fact, then more than an hour briskly engaged. And here, in passing, a word about the *accidental* manner in which it became engaged, as at least new to some.

Meade reached the field during the night after the first day's fighting, and in the morning overlooked the situation and was dissatisfied. He thought Pipe Creek a better place. Sickles had the day before sent word to Meade that he had gone to the relief of Howard at Gettysburgh, and suggested the propriety of concentrating at that point. Thus the responsibility of that selection was largely upon him, and with true manliness, himself took the only weak place in what must be conceded was a naturally strong line for a defensive battle; and it should be remembered that we were then on the defensive. Under these circumstances Sickles, perhaps made a little anxious by the adverse judgment of Meade, and because, too, of the exposure of his position, thought to improve it by occupying a ridge in his front and moved out for that purpose. But the practiced eye of Lee it seems had caught this same ridge or threatening round-top hill on our left, which in turn threatened the whole federal position; and had

ordered Longstreet to take possession of it which he was then in the act of doing. Thus in manœuvering for the crest of this ridge, Sickles, with his corps and the whole left wing of the army, became unexpectedly engaged, to the great chagrin of Meade, who was still intent upon falling back to his favorite position near Taneytown. Some have spoken of this step on the part of Sickles as unfortunate. In my judgment history will record it otherwise. It is not my purpose, however, on this occasion to defend it; my only object is to show how that step precipitated the engagement, and prevented the possible retreat of the army to Pipe Creek.

“A grain of dust,  
Soiling our cup, will make our senses reject,  
Fastidiously, the draft we did thirst for;  
A rusty nail placed near the faithful compass,  
Will sway it from the truth, and wreck the argosy.”

That movement of Sickles was the “rusty nail” which drew to “wreck the argosy” of the rebellion. Only for that, the battle of Gettysburgh might never have been fought, for at that very moment Meade was in council with his corps commanders, on the question of falling back; to which Sickles, though summoned, had not reported, being busy with his change of position. A second order, however, of a peremptory character, brought him to headquarters, but he did not dismount. His corps was already fiercely attacked in front and flank by Longstreet, which at once broke up the council and turned attention to business. Thus was inaugurated the heavy fighting of this the great pivotal battle of the war; and for two days the rebel horde surged against the iron wall of the Army of the Potomac in vain. For two days anxiety and suspense were depicted on every countenance in the land. Should the Army of the Potomac give way, then all was lost. For two days the heart of the great

loyal North stood still. All hearts were turned to Gettysburgh. The Vermont heart, too, was turned to Gettysburgh. She was represented on that field by two brigades of infantry and her regiment of cavalry, and they were not idle. Time, however, forbids a detailed statement of the gallantry of each organization; besides the records which each there made are known to all; so, too, is the honor and glory which Vermont there won, in giving the finishing stroke to the victory known to all. All know how, after two days stubborn fighting, during which charge after charge in solid column had been made upon our lines, 15,000 men, the flower of the Army of Northern Virginia, until then held in reserve, were massed for one final desperate assault; and how that assault, that last terrible charge of Picket's division, the topmost wave of that bloody struggle, the topmost wave of the rebellion, came surging up to the south of Cemetery Hill, and broke harmlessly at the feet of Vermont troops; on whose stern countenances was written, with something of Divine illumination, "Hitherto shalt thou come but no farther; and here shalt thy proud wave be staid," and Gettysburgh was won. Where, according to the felicitous expression of one\* of your number, "the rebellion touched high-water mark;" even after which, according to the eloquence of another,† "the wave was refluent." It remains only to be observed that the exact spot, where the rebellion "touched high-water mark," was the immediate front of Stannard's brigade of Green Mountain boys. This is not mere assertion—there is the best of authority for it. Gen. Doubleday, who commanded the 1st Corps on that day, testifying before the committee on the conduct of the war, says: "The prisoners taken stated

---

\*Col. G. G. Benedict. †Col. W. G. Veazey.

that what ruined them was Stannard's brigade on their flank ; and that they drew off all in a huddle to get away from it." But it will be remembered that the Vermonters did not let them get away, but captured prisoners largely in excess of their own numbers, including two regimental colors and a battle flag.

But the day was won, and the country breathed freer. Next day, July 4th, Pemberton, apprehensive that Grant might be inclined to celebrate a little on his account, surrendered Vicksburgh. Port Hudson fell as ripe fruit—Lee, lost no time in seeking the south bank of the Potomac and, suddenly, the whole situation was changed. Though much heavy fighting, really the heaviest of the war remained to be done, yet, the rebellion had received its death blow, and was everywhere on the wane. The Mississippi was opened and its entire length patrolled by our gun-boats. Our navy along the coast took new courage, and added new vigilance to the blockade. The Army of the Potomac, forgot its early lessons of how to retreat in good order, and ever after fought only to advance. Our arms were everywhere successful. Early was rudely helped out of the Shenandoah by Sheridan, who left the harvests of that fertile valley, the granary of Virginia, smouldering ash heaps. Lee, at Richmond, was at last in Grant's firm grasp, from which no enemy ever escaped. Sherman had swept down from the mountains to the sea, everywhere burning what cotton he could not transport, and with torch and levelling ax, had, in the language of his famous foraging order, "enforced a devastation more or less relentless, according to the measure of hostility shown by the inhabitants." Savannah had fallen, and Charleston in turn, as he swept through the Carolinas, leaving Columbia in flames as he passed. Then it was, that the

rebellion, hungry and worn out, began to understand that in provoking war it had verily,

“Tempted the fury of his three attendants :  
Lean famine, quartering steel and climbing fire.”

But the rebel armies still held out, and the southern people still clung to a cause that had really been doomed since July 4th, 1863. The Lieutenant General, however, was at last ready, and without going into particulars, which would reflect a full share of glory upon Vermont troops, let it suffice that Grant closed the war, as Napoleon did the campaign at Austerlitz, “with a clap of thunder.” Lee surrendered April 9th ; Johnston, the 14th ; Dick Taylor, the 19th which was immediately followed by the rebel navy under Commodore Farrand and Kirby Smith’s army, in Texas. Thus, like a dissolving view, the rebellion suddenly vanished into thin air ; and those who were left of the 2,688,523 men, who, at the call of their country, had come forth from peaceful vocations and devoted themselves, with such singular energy, to the havoc and waste of war, nearly as suddenly, glided back again to a pursuit of the arts of peace ; one of the most sublime spectacles in the history of the world. These men had fought not for glory or gain, neither for ambition of their own, or that of prince or ruler, but for the integrity and perpetuity of the Union and for the freedom of men. They had left 400,000 of their comrades, 5,000 and more of whom were from Vermont, on the field, who had bravely met death in some one of the many revolting forms incident to war. Left a sacrifice for the sins of the nation ; the price of liberty to a race—

“Four hundred thousand men,  
The brave, the good, the true,  
In tangled wood, in mountain glen,  
On battle plain, in prison pen,  
Lie dead, for me and you ;  
Four hundred thousand of the brave  
Have made our ransomed soil their grave,  
For me and you, kind friends,  
For me and you.”



And who can compass the grief or fathom the sorrow which, for them, has since everywhere brooded over the land; and which, at their mention, still leaves the eye moist and the voice choked. Their ashes are sacred, and any eulogium which even the most finished eloquence can offer, in their praise, is utterly futile. Words of mine are certainly too feeble; and I can only say in the language of another:

“Take them, O, God, our brave,  
The glad fulfillers of thy dread decree;  
Who grasped the sword, for peace,  
And smote to save,  
And, dying for freedom, Lord, died for thee.”

Let us, then, turn from the dead to the living; to those who were fondly leaning upon the arm of these strong men stricken down in defense of their country; to dependent woman, to decrepit age and helpless infancy. These, the wards of the nation, must be,—already are amply provided for, and must never be neglected. Those too, in our midst, sad reminders of the shock of battle, with an arm or a leg shot away, or still suffering from disease unchecked or wounds unhealed, are equally objects of tenderest care and solicitude. These last are still with us, and long may they survive, to stir with their mute appeals, the heart of our busy, thoughtless millions, with a constant response to the pleading lines of the Scottish bard—

“The brave poor soldier ne’er despise,  
Nor count him as a stranger;  
Remember he was his country’s stay,  
In day and hour of danger.”

Let all “remember” this, now that the danger is passed, and anxiety and fear no longer act as spurs upon the flank of drowsy gratitude—now, that,

“Grim visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front,  
And—instead of mounting barbed steeds,  
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,  
The soldier’s arms are hung up as monuments;  
His stern alarms changed to merry meetings,  
His dreadful marches to delightful measures.”

But here, I am admonished that my hour is passed, and that I must detain you only a moment longer. I cannot however, help adverting to some of the first fruits of the peace, and to the glorious future of the Union, which we now enjoy. The one achieved, and the other preserved, through your valor. Who can contemplate without a thankful heart, the rich heritage of civil and religious liberty which a kind Providence has vouchsafed us? Who too, who loves his country, and loves the race can, without emotion, cast his eye down the future of this vast ocean bound republic; hereafter, to be in fact, what it has heretofore only been in name, the land of liberty, with no crouching slave in all our broad domain? Who, too, can calculate the salutary effects of our example, the magnetic influence of which, was felt in every quarter of the globe, the moment the flag of treason went down and again, as of old—

“These thirty and odd States, confederate in one,  
Held their starry stations around the western sun.”

I say it was felt everywhere. Napoleon, quailing before the bristling bayonets of our half million veterans, who had just quelled the greatest rebellion which the world ever saw, said, in reply to a little note from our premier, give me a little time and I will get out of Mexico—and he did; and the result was in a few months all that was left of the Mexican Empire, was carefully embalmed and sent back to Europe, from whence it came—and Maxmillian, the Arch Duke and Emperor, sleeps with his fathers; his untimely and violent death furnishing ambitious princes a wholesome warning, that on this continent at least, there is no right divine in a crown.—Not only this but the masses throughout Europe read in the re-establishment of our Union their own deliverance;

and breaking away from the traditions of centuries at once raised the standard of reform.

In England, through the necessary concessions of Crown and Parliament, the right of suffrage was extended, but this failed to check the liberal wage, which, in its flood, has since swept away two Tory administrations, and at last placed a Gladstone at the head of the British Ministry.

The Scandinavian north too, our ancestral land, felt the thrill of our victory. Germany, no longer willing to brook Austrian despotism, welcomed Prussian intervention; and when the famous quadrilateral yielded, it was a triumph, no less for German freedom than for the genius of Bismarck. But what is still more noteworthy, Austria herself in turn, seeing that the world really does move, is emulating, even outrunning her neighbors in liberal legislation, which always means liberty for the people. Italy, in the German-Italian war, won for herself all that Germany did, and again in 1867, rallying under her Garibaldi, dealt a blow at the supremacy of the church, in temporal affairs, which at once awoke the feeble, incoherent mutterings of the Vatican, and started the Pope's Nuncios, post haste, for the Emperor of the French; who, once a Republican, now wields an iron ceptre, and is a standing apologist for tyranny. Almost the only monarch in Europe whose government has not responded to the triumph of liberty in this. But in France the early dissolution of the Empire is looked for in the threatened dissolution of the Emperor; after which, if the signs of the times may be trusted, the liberty-loving, enthusiastic Frenchmen will make another attempt at the establishment of civil liberty; and let us hope a successful one.

Spain, also, once the pioneer of all that was bold, aggressive and civilizing, but for these last hundred years



and more, given over to ignorance, vice and bigotry, has, at last awoke from her degradation and imbecility, and through the sword of Prim, and the trumpet tongue of Castellar, is inaugurating an era of social and political reform; not an unimportant feature of which, is the sending away the profligate and dissolute Isabella, and the saying to the world, we have done with the Bourbons. Cuba, too, sitting beneath the shadow of our institutions, too near to withstand their influence, stimulated by our example, and copying the lesson of the mother country, asks to be free. These, comrades, are some of the effects of your late victory upon the struggling millions, throughout the world, who are panting for free institutions. But who shall compute, for the ages, the blessings of that victory, not only abroad but at home; and who shall measure its effect upon the future of our own country? It should be remembered that we are but in our infancy; only 93 years old. Greece saw a thousand years, and Rome 1200 before the "Goth and Vandall thundered at her gates;"

"And massacre sealed her eternal night."

Proportioned only to our youth is our present greatness. Who shall tell the future under our regenerated constitution? As the shock of great battles usually arouses the natural elements, and the roar of artillery is, after a little, answered by the artillery of the clouds, which is followed by the cool refreshing shower, always so grateful to the wounded and weary combatants; so great wars almost invariably arouse to new vigor the energies of man, and when peace finally comes, the civilization which succeeds, is always higher and better than the one which went before. If war destroys, it also creates. If it exhausts, it likewise makes strong. All know how the crusades,

which for two centuries agitated Europe and left her in utter prostration, were followed by the revival of letters; which, four hundred years before, were buried beneath that barbarian avalanche from the north; were also closely followed by Wickliffe, "the morning star of the reformation," who rose out of the dark night of that middle period, asserting the freedom of conscience, and the emancipation of mankind from the Papal See was begun.—And, if the reaction which followed the terribly depressing effects of the holy wars, lifted Europe out of mediæval barbarism; what triumphs in art and literature, in religion, in law and in liberty, may we not look for in this new era of the republic; with every impulse of our teeming millions quickened by the heroic, energizing influences of the late war? Let us not, however, lose sight of the duties of the present in any dazzling vision of the future.

Let us, rather, remember that upon each succeeding generation, and now upon this generation, is devolved the high work of preserving and transmitting unimpaired our matchless institutions; and if our opportunities and privileges are great, in exact proportion also are our responsibilities. Let us, therefore, for the work still before us, gather wisdom from the past, and inspiration and courage from the present; and, like Varro, whose fidelity to Rome nothing could shake, and who, in Rome's greatest trial when the stoutest faltered, "did not despair of the commonwealth," let us, whether soldiers or citizens, never waver in devotion to our country and the flag; the proud old flag—no less proud to-night, as here it hangs in peaceful folds, than when flung to the breeze, amid the thunder and hail of battle it beckoned you on to victory. And though every conceivable disaster and peril overtake the republic, let us never lose faith in the union of these

States; so lately assailed, but through your valor preserved, and cemented anew with your blood and sufferings, and the blood and sufferings of your comrades, both the living and the dead—not idly vaunting the glories of that Union, nor blindly asserting its perpetuity; but trusting to the republican doctrines of equality and self-government, and to the intelligence and virtue of the people; let us, comrades, *under that union*, strive to make the moral and intellectual grandeur of the Republic equal to its material greatness. Then, without arrogance, and with no disregard of the laws of national life and longevity, can we express the hope, that no poet, of this, or any future age, may stand amid the ruins of this country, and ask of us, as Byron did of Greece, when he drew his sword in defence of religion and liberty in that classic but degenerate land :

“ Shrine of the mighty, can it be,  
That this is all that’s left of thee ?”







AN  
ORATION  
BEFORE THE  
RE-UNION SOCIETY  
OF  
VERMONT OFFICERS,

IN THE  
REPRESENTATIVES' HALL, MONTPELIER, VT.,

November 4, 1869:

By GEN. WILLIAM W. GROUPE,  
BARTON, VT.

---

RUTLAND  
TUTTLE & CO., PRINTERS.  
1869.







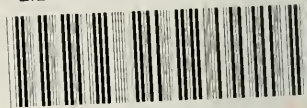








LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 760 322 6

